

## WEST LAFAYETTE BEAUTIFICATION AWARD

JULY, 2010

Master Gardeners of Tippecanoe County, Inc

Butterfly Garden at the Celery Bog

Shortly after Lilly Nature Center opened in 2000, a WL Parks employee approached the Master Gardeners and asked if they would be interested in starting a native plant garden to attract butterflies. Many in the group had started to serve as docents in the Nature Center and were interested in enhancing the experiences of visitors by demonstrating native plants. The group did a lot of research to find out what plants, flowers, shrubs and vines were food for caterpillars as well as nectar sources for adult butterflies. Many sources of caterpillar food already were in the wetlands and woods, so they focused on bringing native flowering plants into a garden setting. Thirty five different species of plants were donated or purchased for the garden.

Later on, a County Parks employee produced hand sketches of each species which were copied and laminated for visitors to use in the garden. Master Gardeners continue to care for the garden which is 2-3 times bigger than it was in 2001, weeding, transplanting, mulching and adding new plants. Much has been learned about what does well in the heavy clay soil, with little irrigation, and what plants are either eaten by rabbits or curl up and die. The garden provides an excellent opportunity for people to get close to the plants, look for butterfly eggs and caterpillars, and to be delighted with adult butterflies when warm weather arrives. The goal of these dedicated gardeners is to have something attractive to butterflies and caterpillars blooming from the beginning of spring until frost in the fall. This garden truly illustrates how native plants can be used to attract and benefit some of nature's greatest gifts: butterflies of Tippecanoe County.

